



key notes

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RECREATION ASSOCIATION

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Notes on the latest in programming and administration in the employee services field
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August 1978

Volume 8, No. 6

SOUND OBJECTIVES REQUIRE SENSITIVE ADMINISTRATION

The success of a personnel program depends not only upon the soundness of its objectives, but also upon how well it is administered. A strong idea can collapse under insensitive administration. Consider, for example, group insurance or credit union operations, whose fundamental value to good employee relations is obvious. Poor administration can turn these personnel program assets into liabilities. A cold or unfriendly attitude toward employees, a delay in services or a failure to keep employees informed of changes, benefits, etc., can lead to irritation and disappointment. Employee complaints might even convince management that such services are not in the best interests of the company.

So it is with all functions of the personnel program, especially the employee services and recreation sectors. A lack of qualified personnel, staff enthusiasm, experienced leadership or obvious humanitarian interest can hurt the best conceived activities and can peg your entire program as a worthless operation. Each of us would do well to evaluate problems in our programs with this in mind. Does the fault lie in our basic ideas and objectives or is it a result of poor operations? Personnel administrators and staffs must be especially sensitive to people's feelings because happy, productive employees are their "product," much as manufactured goods are the line managers' products.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ARE ESSENTIAL TO OVERALL PROGRAMS

Special interest groups are an essential asset to your employee association because they provide additional events and programs geared to a wide variety of interests that would be difficult for the parent association to handle collectively.

Special interest groups include clubs, teams, leagues or classes which are a part of the parent recreation association. Each should have its own constitution, bylaws and operating procedures within the mandates of the overall organization.

Many of these groups may be so small that their activities could not be included in the general program without a provision for special interests. Some of the special interest groups most evident in employee organizations are sport teams and athletic leagues, hobby clubs, travel groups and retirees' associations. Under a well organized arrangement for special interest groups, the parent organization can concentrate on major all-employee activities such as annual social events, awards presentations and the development of new employee services and benefits. This approach increases employee involvement and participation, provides for more leadership opportunities, and doubles or triples the number of activities possible in a calendar year.

RETIREE CLUBS: SPECIAL AMONG SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Industrial recreation associations that sponsor retiree clubs reap varied benefits and contribute a valued community service. Such a special interest club should share in any allotments granted the association and be expected to operate on an approved budget under the association's jurisdiction. Creative recreation helps stimulate and motivate the elderly both physically and emotionally. When retirees associate enjoyable activities with their former place of employment, they become good will ambassadors among active employees and the general public. They help generate respect for the company that shows its concern for employees who have contributed many years of service. The recreation association can involve retirees in many ways that are beneficial to the association and fun for the former employees. Retirees are a ready source of temporary help and are often eager to handle jobs that do not require a full-time employee. Many are invaluable as consultants. The association profits from the arrangement by obtaining volunteers to work on projects that require preparation during regular working hours. It also benefits from the retirees' combination of enthusiasm and experience. When retirees take part in the active employee program, a close bond often develops between the younger employees and the "old timers." This fills a real need for companionship and continuity that is greatly appreciated by both groups and can increase company identity and pride across the board.

POT-BELLY STOVE CONFERENCE -- OR RED HOT SPORTS CLINKERS

Monday morning quarterbacking is an American pastime. Why not make it an official employee recreation activity? After each major sports game, or by season's end, plan a review conference covering the plays, the mistakes, etc. Invite coaches, sports writers, sports announcers and sports merchandisers to sit in and discuss the action. If you want to make it more alluring, develop the sessions around a "Red Hot Burner" membership. Pot-belly stove symbols or pins can be issued each member who joins the Red Hots. Serve the fans' favorite refreshments. With proper planning, these sessions can become entertaining season regulars.

PLAN NOW FOR WINTER ACTIVITIES

It's the outdoor season for many activities, but there are a host of indoor events that can also be in the planning stages now. A winter movie night each week or month can be most popular, especially when followed by a theatre brunch or refreshment hour. An old-fashioned sleigh party will attract the entire family. A state park lodge accommodation offer can be great family fun in the winter. When you reserve facilities, plan on such additional activities as square dances, cookouts, cross-country skiing and winter photo trips. A pre-season holiday decoration class, cookie and cake demonstrations, mixology classes, gift wrapping courses and many more interesting events can be arranged for the pre-holiday season. Just plant this idea seed with a committee and it will surely blossom for the holidays ahead.

DISCOUNT TICKET BOOKS -- CHECK 'EM OUT

There are a multitude of coupon books offered around the country. Some are worthy as an employee benefit, while many are just "rip off" set-ups that will only infuriate the purchaser and create a headache for the organization sponsoring the program.

Usually, the value of a coupon program is in the worth of the coupons. They may represent as much as 20 to 30 times the cost of the book. When reviewing a coupon book offer, check the quality of merchandise or service and vendors listed. See if the coupon purchase must be accompanied by another purchase. Notice if the coupon is good only on certain days at certain times. See if the coupons will be honored on specials and sale items. Check the variety of merchandise and services offered. Ask if those offering the benefits are under contract to honor the coupons for one year. Be skeptical if your source collects a substantial sales commission on each book. For every dollar given in commission, there are usually at least three for the promoter. Check with the Better Business Bureau and the police department before agreeing to offer the books for sale to your employees. Ask for one of the coupon books for a committee to review, investigate and use in advance just to find out how well the merchant or supplier honors the coupons. If your investigation shows a coupon book to be a solid value, you may find it to be one of the most popular benefits you offer -- and one that is easy to administer.

A NIGHT AT THE RACES

Here is a whole, packaged adult entertainment program that always turns out to be a winner. A Nite at the Races, Inc., 2320 Avenue U, Brooklyn, New York 11229, telephone (212) 769-7355 will supply horse races on 16mm film. If your organization policy allows gambling, you will find the company's service is a real winner. The films should be staged in true race track fashion, with programming for all who just can't resist attending. Find a master of ceremonies who resembles a Kentucky colonel to introduce the action. There's a daily double, a quinella, an exacta, a numeracta and just plain old-fashioned horse track betting. Horses like "Money Belt" have the reputation of buckling down and will earn your respect. If you put your money on "Soap Suds", who is all washed up, you will leave the track clean. Naturally, refreshments play an important part in this night at the races. This activity includes the four common denominators of recreation:

- (1) Eating and drinking
- (2) Simple movement
- (3) Observation
- (4) Chance to win

Any program that has all four of these factors present will never be left at the starting gate.

The Owens-Illinois Building Onized Club in Toledo, Ohio recently held a Night at the Races and had to turn down many who wanted to attend because there simply was not room enough to accommodate them all.

RESEMBLANCE PARTY IS GOOD FOR LAUGHS

In every company, there are people who look or act like famous people. With a little help from a drama group, director or instructor, a program can be arranged to spotlight your M.I.P.P.'s (Most Important People Present).

Make the event an entertaining guessing game, by encouraging some well-coached impersonations, a few comic remarks and a good showman to introduce the program. Famous quotes would be given to the audience as clues to the identity of the person. The first person in the audience to stand up is recognized and may make a guess. If the answer he or she gives is correct, the answerer wins a new dollar bill. If the first guess is wrong, a second person gets a chance and the prize money increases by a few pennies. This continues on each time until the prize reaches some specified limit -- or your famous look-alike is booed off the stage.

Presentations and imitators can also be used as floor shows or banquet entertainment. The imitators can exaggerate the actions, speech and habits of the person they are impersonating to create some hilarious entertainment.

THE OLD IS NEW: TRY A QUILTING BEE

Quilting bees are one of the oldest forms of group entertainment in America. They can still be great fun, as well as creative money-savers, for many employees.

A room 9 x 12 feet or larger provides a place to set up the quilting frames and chairs for the quilters. To start this most interesting and profitable activity, a person knowledgeable in the art should be engaged to serve as an instructor and chairperson. Select someone who can also provide historical background for the art.

Churches, schools and clubs have also held quilting bees and have marketed the quilts as a means to raise funds. Try the same approach yourself. Before your quilters put their artwork on the market, however, caution them to check with experts about its value. They may be pleasantly surprised by the high price their handiwork will bring.